THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH. (a) and (b) During talks, Foreign Minister Ivanov comprehensively explained Russia's views on President Bush's Statement of 1st May 2001 and added, in the context, that the Indian and Russian approaches mostly coincide. He said that Russia welcomed consultations launched by the US and looked forward to meetings with US with proposals of its own, including President Putin's comprehensive proposal about reductions in strategic offensive weapons and ballistic missile defences. India stated that the 1972 ABM Treaty should not be abrogated unilaterally.

(c) Yes, Sir. These consultations have subsequently been held during the months of May and June. The United States has stated that it intends to continue with these consultations.

Classification of bottled water as food

*64. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently, classified bottled water as food and has placed it under the purview of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act (PFA) and have also made BIS certification and PFA licence compulsory for the bottled water;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the objective, sought to be achieved thereby;

(c) the reasons why the notification classifying bottled water as food was issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and not by his Ministry; and

(d) the main players in the bottled water business in the Indian market and whether all of them would be covered by the aforesaid regulations?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHANTA KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Packaged Drinking Water is actually a processed food item and altogether different from ordinary water which is available in ponds, rivers, canals, sea or is supplied by various authorities. Therefore, Government decided to declare Packaged Drinking Water as food under the Prevention of Food Adulteration (PFA) Act, 1954 and simultaneously bring it under the requirement

of Compulsory Certification by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), so that the quality of these products is checked and maintained at the manufacturing level itself.

(c)The PFA Act 1954 is administered by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. Therefore, the notification was issued by the Ministry of "Health & Family Welfare and not by Ministry of Consumer Affairs.

(d) All the manufacturers of Packaged Drinking Water have to take licence from the BIS for manufacture & sale of these products under the BIS Certification Mark and at present there are one hundered ninty-nine licencees of packaged drinking water.

Wheat export to Iraq

†*65. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Iraq has refused to take wheat exported by India;

(b) if so, the number-of occasions when wheat was exported to Iraq by India and the number of occasions when Iraq had refused to take it;

(c) the reasons mentioned by Iraq for not taking the wheat and whether Government have fixed any responsibility in this regard;

(d) if so, the details thereof and the action Government have taken against them; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHANTA KUMAR): (a) to (e) Iraq has recently rejected four consignments of wheat shipped by three private parties from India insisting . that the cargo should be totally free from inorganic matter, such as, sand, sillica, dust and asphalt, and also like insects.

As per the International CODEX standards, foreign matter in the grain is permissible upto 2% out of which 1.5% consists of organic matter, such as, chaff, weed seeds, other edible and non-edible grains etc. and the balance (0.5%) inorganic foreign matter, such as stones, dust, etc. Quality specifications prescribed in the Iraqi contract provided for the presence of foreign matter upto

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.